

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
Small Group Ministry Session
Tending the Rituals of Our Lives
First Universalist Church of Auburn, ME, UU, Rev. Glenn Turner, 9/13/2021
Caroline Loupe, facilitator

CHALICE LIGHTING AND OPENING WORDS

On Listening. . .

To listen well is as powerful a means of influence as to talk well,
And is as essential to all true conversation.

When we listen with full heart and mind,
We let go of the inner chatter
That tempts us to listen elsewhere.

When we listen with full heart and mind,
We dispense with judgment.

When we listen with full heart and mind,
We are present to each other
And are at risk of transformation.

MOMENTS OF MEDITATION/REFLECTION

Let us pause in silence, listening to our own flow of breath, relaxing our bodies and allowing our thoughts and feelings to settle before we begin our sharing.

SHARING/CHECK-IN

Let us focus on this time of coming together—the ritual of our Small Group meetings. . .the familiarity and joy of returning, the gratitude we feel for each other’s commitment of this time. . .Then, allow your thoughts to focus on joys, concerns, inspirations, insights, whatever is troubling us, weighing on our minds and calling for attention to be shared and witnessed.

FOCUS: Tending the Rituals of Our Lives

“It isn’t more light we need, it’s putting into practice what light we already have. When we do that, wonderful things will happen with our lives and within our world.” Peace Pilgrim

Our lives are constantly changing, as is the world around us. The global pandemic is a most poignant reminder of this truth. In these times of deep disruption, our longest-held rituals certainly can provide some of the guidance, centering, and healing we most need. And yet there is a call, an unexpected opportunity, to take stock of how we do things. Surely, we can say that coming here today, our Small Group, is a ritual that have created to nourish us. There are others in our lives that we participate in.

Let’s begin the discussion of Rituals by differentiating them from habits such as brushing our teeth, eating breakfast, taking daily walks, doing exercises. . .good, important habits, for sure, which can certainly be done with attention and earnestness, but are not generally done with the purpose of being attentive and creating mindful ritual.

An overview of Ritual, as I'd like us to consider it today, is that Ritual is a discrete, intentional activity we can or already do in some committed ways. . . an activity that we acknowledge is an important way to express and cultivate our values. Ritual may deepen them and increase our sense of wonder, gratitude and connection.

We already participate as individuals or in groups in Rituals, such as weekly church services or Open Mics, maybe pausing before meals to be thankful. Sometimes people and cultures perform their own morning or evening rituals. Ritual can surely be a sacred experience in that we choose to make it important and that we do so in a regular way. Surely Ritual is associated with various Spiritual ceremonies of Living and Dying, welcoming and bringing closure and meaning to life. Religious traditions invite us into Ritual experiences, individually or collectively with prayer, meditation, song, poetry, chant, dance.

1. So, with this backdrop, let's look at our time today as an opportunity to take stock of current rituals we attend or observe and think about how those rituals continue to nourish our lives, express our values, deepen our sense of wonder and awe? Have our values been highlighted in any way because of the changes of rituals? How so?
2. Formal or informal, what would you consider to be nourishing new rituals that you may have created during this time of change when gathering with others is more difficult—rituals that continue to honor important traditions that you value? How do these enrich us, support us and lift us up in these demanding times? Is there any other personal or public ritual that you know about and might want to take this time to explore?

LIKES AND WISHES AND HOUSEKEEPING:

CLOSING WORDS from Pierre Pradervand

"I bless this day for the wonderful adventure it can become as I walk through it with the eyes of wonder rather than boredom, use every opportunity to express peace rather than irritation, and choose love over fear."